

Swauk Pine Restoration Project – Education and Enforcement Recommendation and Strategy

The Cle Elum Ranger District's Education and Enforcement Program is 100% State Grant Funded annually from April through October. We have a crew of four full-time Forest Protection Officers that patrol our 400 miles of off-road trails, our District's numerous multi-use campgrounds, dispersed sites and trailheads. Our two most popular ORV use areas include the Taneum and the Liberty. With rare exceptions, we have crews patrolling these locations every weekend. In addition, we work with various trained volunteer groups that assistance with trail patrol (user education), signage and maintenance. We partner with the Pacific NW 4WD Association for 10 days each spring (week leading up to and including Memorial Day Weekend).

For the purpose of the Swauk Pine Restoration Project, based on our observations from previous reroutes of popular and well-established trails that are replaced with new rerouted sections, we recommend the following criteria in order to be successful (historical routes remaining closed into perpetuity):

1. A steady application of education (E&E and V-Team Crew), fitting route evaluation techniques and trail construction that makes sense (Engineering), consistent enforcement (E&E Crew), and public encouragement and cooperation.
2. Good public communication (Press Releases) that easily detail the reasons said routes are being closed. This should, of course, include ample opportunity for concerned members of agencies and user-groups to voice their apprehensions to said project. During the NEPA process, up to the decision, this is the project lead responsibility to notify the public. After the decision, it is the responsibility of the recreation OHV department to implement the closures and decommissioning prescriptions
3. **Good pre-work education** that includes project informational signs around main project work access points (in this case, Williams Campground bulletin boards USFS Road 9718/Liberty Main road, and both ends of 4WD339). Social media (Facebook Pages Cle Elum Trails Off-Road Team and Naches Off-Road Team), Community Outreaches (local newspapers), trial user Associations such as NMA, PNW4WDA and WTA), and the Official USFS Webpage. **It is within our crew's normal duties to post educational signage.**
4. **Emphasis patrol for 2 seasons.** It takes roughly two full seasons for old trail treads, if sufficiently put-to-bed, to heal over and vegetation to begin to take root. It is also our observation that well-constructed reroutes that flow and make sense to trail users survive the re-route process. 4WD trails are especially vulnerable to old routes being re-opened with onboard equipment (winches, saws, hand tools, etc.). The old trail should be professionally put to bed and rehabbed if the end goal (no reopening) is to be achieved. This would best be accomplished using machines (trail backhoe, for example) and indigenous vegetation introduced. Signs, gates and barriers should be considered in high sensitive areas such as water crossings. Brush and timber camouflage and designing a reroute that is well established will decrease the chance of reopening the original trail(s). We have found it nearly impossible to keep hill climbs and trails closed unless they are sufficiently blocked, signed and re-vegetated.
5. **The implementation of seasonal closures.** Our crew advocates the implementation of *soft dated* Seasonal Closures. We have, in cooperation with our trained volunteers and user-groups, posted voluntary seasonal trail closures to motorized use since 2010. The closure occurs nearly every spring and trails are open on June 15th or as the snow melts, trails dry out, and winter blowdown is removed. The decision to open trails before June 15th is determined by the ORV Crew and involves input by our trained ORV volunteers. This cooperative effort has helped build trust between our users and the USFS and has proven very effective in preserving the trail's tread and the effectiveness of well-established drainage and decreased tread rutting.

6. **The implementation of decommissioning of unauthorized routes.** The Swauk Pine project will decommission 3.16 miles of unauthorized trails post project, the design, contract preparation, funding, and workforce planning will be the responsibility of the recreation department.

With the implementation of the aforementioned our crew will be far more successful at keeping the old trail and hill climbs permanently closed.

Strategy for protecting the Swauk Pine Restoration Project restoration efforts and goals –

1. Maintain open communication with our Volunteer Patrols and public. Our crew's public compliance success is centered on public trust. That trust comes when we involve the public every step of the way. We will educate by:
 - a. Emphasizing the long term benefits (multi-use road, new trail loop and reroutes that are environmentally sustainable).
 - b. Using Social Media (Facebook Cle Elum Off-Road Team and Naches Off-Road Team and the official Okanogan Wenatchee Webpage) to keep the public informed.
 - c. Keeping the front desk informed on project every step of the way.
 - d. Attending the Pacific NW 4WD Association (PNW4WDA) Region 4's monthly meetings (April through September) and are always available to announce plans and answer questions.
 - e. Designing, printing and distributing Swauk Pine Restoration Project flyers on routine patrols.
2. We will emphasize our trail patrol in this area for the first two seasons the system opens (as reroutes becomes well established and blocked roads and trails are overgrown). Our E&E crew works weekly with trained volunteers, assuring better coverage than our crew alone. Emphasized patrols involve weekly area road and trail runs. In doing so we can:
 - a. Post and maintain on the ground educational material. Install and maintain informational signs.
 - b. Help protect the on-ground signage and replace immediately if or when it is torn down or defaced.
 - c. Replace or report any barrier that has been moved.
 - d. Make certain all closed hill climbs remain closed and signed closed.
 - e. Educate trail users and dispersed campers.
 - f. Enforce regulations.